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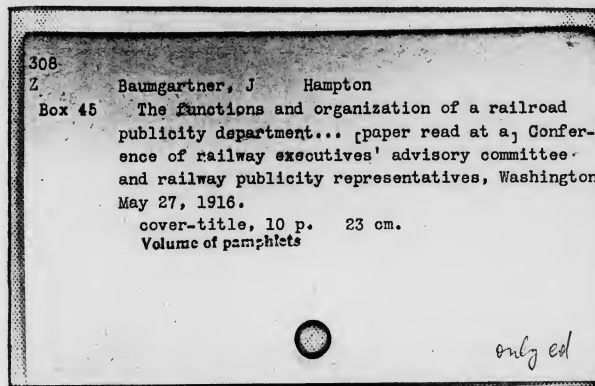
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THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION  
OF A RAILROAD PUBLICITY  
DEPARTMENT

BY J. HAMPTON BAUMGARTNER

PUBLICITY REPRESENTATIVE

BALTIMORE AND OHIO SYSTEM

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CONFERENCE OF RAILWAY EXECUTIVES' ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
AND RAILWAY PUBLICITY REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, MAY 27, 1916

U. S. RAILROADS  
13-1

## THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF A RAILROAD PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT.

### FUNCTIONS.

In a broad sense the Publicity Department should be delegated with authority to handle all matters involving the public relations of a railroad. It should be the medium of promoting good will and effecting an intelligent understanding of railroad problems on the part of the communities and people whom its facilities serve or concern; likewise it should afford the means of conducting campaigns of legitimate exploitation of large direct profit, and through it the standard of loyalty of the employees to the management should be raised and their citizenship improved. The ramifications of these general functions will be considered in proper order.

That the railroad interests should lose no opportunity to promote public relations of a friendly character is apparent, especially when the transportation industry of the United States is just beginning to realize the benefits of fair treatment in some measure of fullness after a long period of years during which strained relations existed between the railroads and the people. Without going into the merits of these differences, persistent effort has proven also that such misunderstandings were adjustable where a spirit of fairness prevailed; and it has been shown that the companies attempting to adjust such matters have realized large returns upon the energy so expended.

### INCEPTION.

The wave of agitation which swept over the country some years ago and crystallized into antagonism toward business was keenly felt by the railroads. With a view to changing this unfriendly attitude into a state approaching more nearly ideal relations with the public on the basis of fairness and equity, railroad officials, possessing a far-sighted vision of the situation now existing, foresaw that the most promising means of solving their problems was afforded through the good offices of the American press. This medium insured a

public hearing for the railroads. Accordingly, there was inaugurated by the carriers a system of co-operating in supplying accurate information of educational value to the public. Thus was established a distinct department of railway service and the Press Bureau was created.

The Publicity Department is the result of enlarging the Press Bureau and should encompass every phase of the railroad's activity as it relates to the public. Forming the nucleus of the work, the press continues to predominate as the most effective vehicle for communicating with the public. Other plans have been devised, however, which work in entire harmony with the press and properly come within the scope of such endeavor.

#### REPRESENTATIVE CAPACITY.

It is all-important in inaugurating a Publicity Department that the honest motives of the railroad company be made clear and it is essential to success that friendly relations be maintained with those who control the policy and the men who edit and write the matter which fills the pages of all classes of publications. The head of this organization should know the ins and outs of newspaper work, understand the value of news and how to present it in written form so as to be acceptable for use and should be so established in journalistic confidence as to be looked upon as the spokesman of the company employing him, thus insuring his official statements being accepted as reliable.

#### PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Enjoying the full confidence of officials of the railroad organization—and unless such is the case success cannot be hoped for—the head of this department of the road should have access to general information concerning his company, so that with the approval of the management proper statements may be made to the public through the proper mediums of dissemination. Articles concerning matters of public policy, such as national, state or community affairs, legislative subjects, improvements, official statements on behalf of the management, changes in officials, facts relating to accidents and numerous other topics should be furnished upon their merits to the local press by railroad representatives.

Mailing lists should be prepared so that articles sent out by the Publicity Department can reach the proper person on the editorial

staff delegated to handle the matter; thus the managing editor, news editor, telegraph editor, railroad or financial editor, state editor or city editor would be in direct touch with the railroad. In mailing communications to the press, fairness prompts that they be sent simultaneously to all concerned.

#### PRESS TELEGRAPH SERVICE.

Press telegraph service should be operated for reaching the newspapers with news matter of sufficient value to have set forth correctly and promptly. This service insures the matter reaching the member of a newspaper staff handling correspondence of immediate value. The telegraph service is indispensable when serious train accidents are involved. By furnishing facts and details concisely, accuracy is insured. The telegraph service is looked upon with favor in press circles. When a newspaper understands that a railroad aims to act honestly with the public and willingly furnishes facts upon its own initiative, the press is invariably disposed to accord fair consideration.

It should be possible for the press to communicate with the Publicity Department by wire day and night, thus receiving prompt replies to inquiries concerning rumors of local interest reaching the newspaper offices on various parts of the system.

#### FORESTALLING CRITICISM.

It should be possible for the head of this department to prepare articles presenting the railroad's side of topics, so that unwarranted criticism would be forestalled. When a particular occasion arises calling for an authoritative statement or interview from an executive officer or other member of the railroad organization, the Publicity Department should be called upon to assist in the preparation of such matter.

#### INSPECTION TOURS.

Inspection tours by the officers of a railroad should include the head of the Publicity Department, who would meet representatives of the press and be prepared to discuss local matters of improvements, etc., explaining the purpose of the trip and preparing official statements or interviews.

## ADDRESSES AND PUBLIC INTERVIEWS.

Records should be kept of facts and figures concerning the railroad situation, as well as historical and general data relating to the company itself, so that upon requests for an official to present a subject to a community in the form of a signed article or interview in a newspaper, or an address before a gathering of business men, the preparation of this material should be assisted in by the Publicity Department.

## INFORMATION DEPARTMENTS OF NEWSPAPERS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

With close working relations established between the Information Departments, which many newspapers conduct as a branch of their editorial offices, the Publicity Department can accomplish much in the way of keeping the public correctly informed by furnishing answers to inquiries concerning railroad subjects of every sort. The Information Department is glad to form such an alliance and is willing to reciprocate by placing its service at the disposal of the Publicity Department.

Educational institutions—universities, colleges, and schools of every description—are constantly seeking information upon railway subjects for the faculty as well as for the students; therefore, the Publicity Department renders valuable assistance to the railroad cause by complying with requests for such data. Members of debate teams and students called upon to present theses when assisted in the collating of data by the Publicity Department are enabled to present the railroad side of questions intelligently.

## EXPLOITATION.

### HOW CONDUCTED.

Successful campaigns of dignified exploitation are another important possibility of the Publicity Department, thus securing wholesome publicity on a large scale; and with the assistance of enterprising officials and permission to use their names in identity with articles prepared, it is possible to create a kindly feeling for the railroad and its officers in the one effort. Sometimes objection is registered by railroad officials against the use of their names in the

press, but this is the age in which publicity accomplishes things and it is believed that a broad view of the subject will remove such objection.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Incident to its dealings with the press, the Publicity Department should establish a business relationship by subscribing to every newspaper in its territory, so that the editors would understand that the railroad was taking an interest in what their papers discuss. It is important to receive the newspapers because it enables the railroad to keep informed concerning the attitude of the communities toward the company.

## PRESS INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.

The Publicity Department should operate a Press Intelligence Service of clippings for the information of the railroad officials and as a matter of record. The clipping service should be handled daily and the articles placed on the desks of the executives at a regular hour. These clippings should embrace all railroad matters, subjects relating to government and state regulation, financial articles, topics of general interest and municipal doings of important character.

## ADVERTISING BUREAU.

An Advertising Bureau, embraced by the Publicity Department or maintaining close working relations with such organization, should prepare advertising matter used in campaigns in newspapers and periodicals, time-table folders, excursion and resort booklets, bill-board posters, etc., which are paid for in cash. With the Advertising Bureau working in accord with the Publicity Department, relations insuring satisfactory results from the standpoint of efficiency and economy could be maintained. In few enterprises is there such wanton waste as in the advertising business, it being apparent on every side to one who has studied the subject that the railroads in common with other branches of industry spend large sums of money annually in advertising upon which there is little or no return.

It is believed to be a mistake for the railroads to operate an Advertising Bureau under the jurisdiction of the Passenger Department, utilizing it solely to create passenger traffic and disregarding the possibilities of securing freight traffic by advertising and engendering good will by policy advertising.

The expense of advertising should be handled by allotments such as are made to cover the expense of maintaining the track, equipment and other property, with a defined ratio in the general expense of operation. It is injudicious to make heavy inroads into advertising expense in the interest of economy. On the theory that when business is dull freight and passenger offices should not be closed, neither should advertising, which draws the traffic, be discontinued.

#### PRINTING OFFICE.

A printing office should be a part of the Publicity Department, so that efficient service could be rendered in turning out work for the various departments of the service. Railroads that have installed a printing office have done so as an economic proposition and experience has proven such a course compensatory. Such an organization entails a large investment for machinery, type, labor, etc., which may not be considered expedient by some managements.

#### DUPLICATION FACILITIES.

Duplication facilities for issuing extra copies of reports, form letters, department blanks, etc., should be a part of the printing office. With this work centralized, a large saving is possible as compared with the cost of employing operators and maintaining machines in departments here and there in the service.

#### PHOTOGRAPH BUREAU.

With a photograph bureau it should be possible to make pictures for advertising, for illustrating articles and other general use at a substantial saving in expense as compared with the charges of a commercial company. Photographs are generally acceptable to the press and make possible the securing of the widest sort of publicity because they attract attention and speak in every tongue.

#### FINANCIAL NEWS.

With a knowledge of the means of disseminating financial news, it should be possible to secure a favorable attitude on the part of the press in fiscal matters, especially in security issues, analyses of earnings and the ratio of expenses and the physical state of the property.

### MEN AND MANAGEMENT.

#### LABOR DIFFICULTIES—BUSINESS DEPRESSION.

Next to the public relations the most promising field open to the Publicity Department is in furthering the spirit of harmony between the men and the management, overcoming discontent and quieting discord by presenting the problems of the company to those on its pay-roll and educating all to a proper sense of loyalty and just pride in the railroad for what it means economically to its men and their dependents as well as to the communities it reaches. In times of labor difficulties with organized forces or during times of business depression calling for rigid economies entailing reduction in the ranks by furlough or otherwise, the men could be reached with a fair presentation of the necessity of such policy without sacrificing the *esprit de corps*.

#### INFORMATION FOR OFFICIALS.

The officials of all departments should be furnished with copies of articles issued to the press and other railroad and business literature, so that they may be fully informed concerning the general affairs of the company. Such literature should reach the soliciting force which secures traffic as well as those who represent the railroad in other capacities. Experience has proven this plan productive of wonderful results. It has been the means of securing large volumes of traffic by presenting advance information, and a testimonial to its usefulness is contained in the fact that most of the offices keep a complete file of the articles and other information supplied by the Publicity Department.

#### EMPLOYEES' MAGAZINE.

An Employees' Magazine furnishes another excellent vehicle for reaching the forces with matter of profit alike to the company and its men. It engenders harmonious relations between them. Such a publication should be a house organ in a strict interpretation of the term, conducted as a source of information to the rank and file. It should contain articles of educational value concerning the company, and only the best thought of recognized authorities on railroad and other questions. An Employees' Magazine need not be expensive in design and should be conducted along modest lines without attempting to compete with the popular magazines as a work of art or to vie with periodicals as an advertising medium. In fact, it

should be maintained by the company and not operated as a profitable advertising proposition. An Employees' Magazine should be conducted by the Publicity Department of a railroad.

#### BULLETINS.

Supplementing the Employees' Magazine, there is an effective medium of publicity open through the preparation of bulletins for enclosure in pay envelopes. Other bulletins could be distributed in the reading rooms or posted on boards in rest houses, terminal locker rooms and other places where the men assemble. Bulletins should be prepared also for public display in stations and other conspicuous places which afford opportunity for publicity.

#### CIRCULARS.

Circular announcements, etc., should be prepared and issued for all departments through the publicity organization.

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

#### INDUSTRIAL, AGRICULTURAL, IMMIGRATION, LAND DEPARTMENTS—CO-OPERATION WITH.

By working in co-operation with the Industrial, Agricultural, Immigration and Land Departments of a railroad the Publicity Department should render material assistance to those branches of the road in community development by emphasizing the interests which the railroad has in common with its patrons as well as pointing out that prosperous communities mean profitable railroad operation, and that as a consequence of this situation the company is vitally concerned in an extension of agricultural and industrial pursuits. Emphasizing the railroad's activities on behalf of the farming population in its territory engenders the good will of farmers, and impresses them with the fact that the company desires to form a business partnership for promoting prosperity.

#### FARMERS' EDUCATIONAL TRAINS— GOOD ROADS TRAINS

The operation of farmers' educational trains offers the means of winning the public opinion of rural communities. A representative of the Publicity Department should accompany these tours of edu-

cation to prepare articles for the local press as well as interesting items for farm journals. The same is true of good roads trains.

### BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS.

Business organizations—such as the Board of Trade, Commercial Club and Manufacturers' Association—should be informed that the railroad is anxious to further their aims by co-operating with the officers and individuals composing the membership. Such organizations make it possible to reach the business men of communities with literature of a wholesome nature. When local complaints against railroad facilities or service arise, it should be possible through the friendly offices of the secretary or other official of the business organization to arrange a meeting at which the railroad officials could adjust such matters. A representative of the Publicity Department should be on hand to see that the press is furnished with a copy of the statements made at such meetings.

Numerous business organizations publish pamphlets or magazines devoted to their activities and the conditions of trade in their respective communities, and through these publications the railroad should be enabled to reach the membership with pertinent literature.

### NATIONAL AND STATE LEGISLATION.

#### LAWS AND BILLS PROPOSED—NATIONAL OR STATE.

The Publicity Department should be of assistance in the preparation of authorized statements setting forth the attitude of the railroad in matters bearing on national or state legislation, laws on the statute books or in the shaping.

### ORGANIZATION.

#### RANK IN EXECUTIVE ORGANIZATION.

The Publicity Department should be established with a view to serving every branch of the service without reserve. The director of the work should be regarded as a staff member of the executive organization. With helpful suggestions from the executive officers in order to avoid conflict with the policy of the company, it should



be within the province of the head of the Publicity Department to suggest advanced ideas which would create wholesome publicity for the company when properly presented through the co-operation of the press.

#### DEPARTMENT FORCE.

There should be an official delegated as publicity agent and located in the respective territories of the railroad, whose duties would embrace a plan of co-operation with the local editors and members of the newspaper staffs in securing information on matters of public interest. Perhaps the most advantageous location would be at the respective grand divisional headquarters. It would be advisable also to have a clerk at divisional headquarters. It should be understood that this plan has been worked out as applicable to the administration of a trunk line railroad, but with a smaller company whose interests are more concentrated certain features could be altered to meet a particular situation.

#### EXPENSE.

The actual cost of a publicity organization would be difficult to fix for many reasons. The thoroughness with which publicity work is undertaken in the directions indicated herein would be a factor governing the expense.



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